FROM A PHOTO.

QUEBEC HOUSE, WESTERHAM, IN WHICH WOLFE'S BOYHOOD WAS SPENT.

A VISIT TO THE BIRTHPLACE OF JAMES WOLFE, THE CONQUEROR OF QUEBEC.

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ALL Canadians know the name of the conqueror of Quebec; many have read the memorable story of his death; few have heard of the place of his birth or are acquainted with the history of his short life.

It is remarkable that there is much uncertainty as to the birth-time or birthplace of some of the world's greatest men. This is even the case with some who have figured in comparatively recent times. As regards the Duke of Wellington, for instance, there has been much dispute, some holding that he was born in Westmeath county, others that the event occurred in Merrion Square, Dublin; then, it is not certain whether he was born in March, April or May, 1769.

Recently, also, some doubts have been raised regarding the accuracy of the long-held belief as to the birthplace of the great naval hero, Horatio Nelson.

For a long time, likewise, there was a vigourous dispute as to the place in which the subject of this sketch was born, it being held by many that the honor belonged to the city of York.

Now, however, there is no difference of opinion, for it has been definitely established that Wolfe was born in the little village of Westerham, in Kent, in 1727.

At the present day this place possesses many of the features which characterized it in the beginning of the last century. It has not felt the stir of the busy industrial life of England, but has lived a vegetative, rural existence in the midst of the pleasant, fertile farmlands of North Kent. The surrounding country is rich in natural

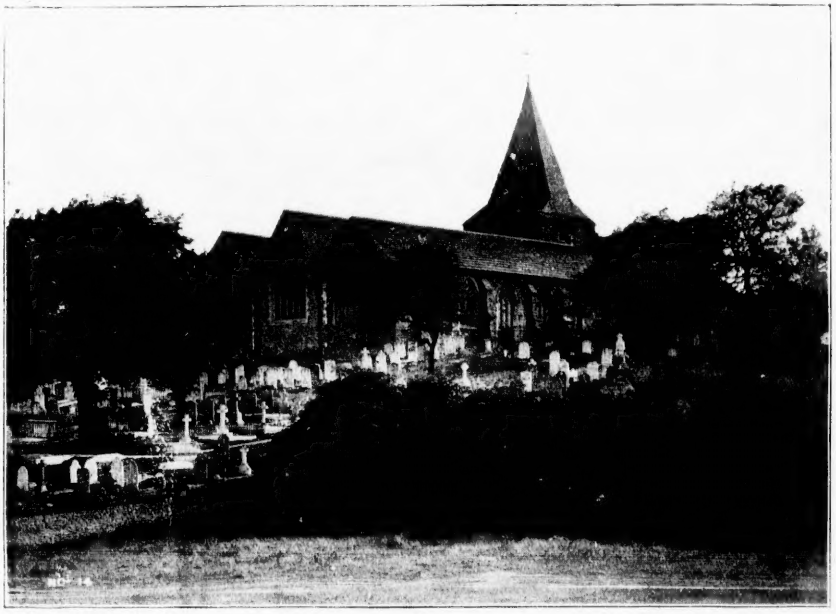
beauty and in historic interest. Not many miles away is Tunbridge Wells, the famous watering-place, filled with memories of John Evelyn, Charles II., Nell Gwynne; and, later, of Beau Nash, Dr. Johnson, Richardson, Davy Garrick and Lord Chesterfield. The life of this resort in the last century has been vividly pourtrayed by Thackeray in "The Virginians."

In the neighbourhood are many famous country-seats, among which may be specially noted the following: Penshurst, the ancient home of the Sidneys; Erridge, the seat of the historic Neville family; Hever, the birthplace of Anne Boleyn.

The Wolfe family had no Kentish association. Colonel Wolfe, the father of the hero, was born in the north of England, and had moved to Westerham only a few months before the birth of his son. His ancestors belonged to Ireland, that nursing-ground of soldiers, where, at the present day, many representatives of the family are to be found, especially in Cork, Limerick and Tipperary counties.

When Colonel Wolfe arrived in Westerham, along with his newly-married wife, a Yorkshire lady, he settled in the Vicarage, where James was born. The house is still in use, and the little room in which the hero first saw the light is open to inspection. The family did not remain there long, but moved to a larger residence when the infant was only a few weeks old. This place, now known as "Quebec House," was Wolfe's home for twelve years. It was a quaint, gabled Elizabethan manor-house, with old-fashioned, low-roofed apartments, a wainscotted hall and gloomy corridors. The attic is a maze of small, irregular rooms, dark and crooked passages, and mysterious recesses, through which, one can well imagine, the sensitive boy often rambled, giving free play to his active imagination. Here, also, was born another son, Edward, who afterwards became a soldier out of love for his elder brother.

On a low eminence near Quebec House is the village church in which Wolfe was baptized. It is a plain



FROM A PHOTO.

WESTERHAM PARISH CHURCH IN WHICH WOLFE WAS BAPTIZED.

Gothic structure, five or six hundred years old. Inside is a marble tablet, erected by several gentlemen of Westerham in memory of the general some years after his death, and inscribed with the following unpoetic verse :

"Whilst George in sorrow bows his laurel'd head
And bids the Artist grace the Soldier dead ;
We raise no sculptured trophy to this name,
Brave youth ! the fairest in the list of fame ;
Proud of thy birth, we boast the auspicious year,
Struck with thy fall, we shed a general tear ;
With humble grief inscribe one artless stone,
And from thy matchless honor date our own."

But the most interesting feature of Westerham is Squerryes Court, a fine old manor-house, dating back to the time of Charles II., the home of an old Kentish family, the Wardes, who have given many brave soldiers to the British army. Through the courtesy of the present proprietor I was enabled to make a thorough examination of the many rare treasures and relics which the house contains.

Wolfe's family were on terms of intimacy with the Warde household, and to this association is to be attributed the fact that Squerryes Court is the chief repository of the most precious memorials of the hero. His boy friends and playmates were John and George Warde, the sons of the proprietor of that day ; their playground, the beautiful park in which the house is situated. In the gardens near the house is a column, surmounted by an urn, erected by the Squerryes family some years after Wolfe's death, to mark the spot on which he stood one day during his Christmas vacation, in 1741, when the King's commission to his first position in the army was placed in his hands. At the base of the column are the following lines :

"Here first was Wolfe with martial ardour fired,
Here first with glory's brightest flame inspired ;
This spot so sacred will for ever claim
A proud alliance with its hero's name."

Squerryes Court contains two portraits of Wolfe. One of these represents him at the age of fifteen, in the scarlet uniform of an ensign in the Twelfth regiment of Foot. It is a full-face picture and shows a frank and pleasant countenance, the eyes being particularly bright and full of expression. The other portrait is by Benjamin West, and is a copy from the large composition picture of this artist, representing the death of Wolfe. It was executed to the order of the proprietor of Squerryes near the end of the last century. Shortly before my visit last year, Colonel Warde, in looking through some old family papers, found the receipt given by West to his ancestor for the money paid for this portrait, amounting to something over twenty-nine pounds sterling.

So far as is known, the former of these portraits is the only one painted from the life by a professional artist, all the others, which are to be found in England, having been made after Wolfe's death.

One of the best known of these is that painted by Schaak, now in the National Portrait Gallery in London, a gift of the King of the Belgians. It is based upon a profile sketch, made at Quebec by Captain Smith, one of the General's aides-de-camp, a few days before the fall of the fortress. This interesting drawing is in the possession of the United Service Club. Very recently the Pym family, who live in the neighbourhood of Westerham, discovered a painting of Wolfe believed to have been done by Gainsborough. It is unsigned, as is the case with all the great works of this master, and is consequently difficult to authenticate.

A well-painted portrait of Wolfe's mother also hangs in the Squerryes collection. It represents her as a young, good-looking woman, with a face expressive of great kindliness of heart, balanced judgment and firmness of character.

One of the most interesting possessions of the house is the collection of her famous son's letters, written to her at various periods of his life. The handwriting is in most cases plain and easily read. Many of them are extremely interesting, two of them in

particular attracting my attention. One of these written at Inverness on his twenty-fifth birthday runs as follows:

"The winter wears away, so do our years, and so does life itself; and it matters little where a man passes his days and what station he fills, or whether he be great or considerable; but it imports him something to look to the manner of life. This day am I five-and-twenty years of age, and all that time is as nothing. When I am fifty (if it so happens) and look back, it will be the same, and so on to the last hour. But it is worth a moment's consideration that we may be called away on a sudden, unguarded and unprepared; and the oftener these thoughts are entertained, the less will be the dread or fear of death. You will judge by this sort of discourse that it is the dead of night, when all is quiet and at rest, and one of those intervals wherein men think of what they really are, and what they really should be; how much is expected and how little performed. Our short duration here, and the doubts of hereafter, should awe and deter the most flagitious, if they reflected on them. The little time taken in for meditation is the best employed in all their lives; for if the uncertainty of our state and being is then brought before us, and that compared with our course of conduct, who is there that won't immediately discover the inconsistency of all his behaviour and the vanity of all his pursuits? And yet, we are so mixed and compounded that though I think seriously this minute, and lie down with good intentions, it is likely I may rise with my old nature, or perhaps with the addition of some new impertinence, and be the same wandering lump of idle errors that I have ever been."

The last letter he ever wrote to his mother is also of interest:

"BANKS OF THE ST. LAWRENCE.

"31st August, 1759.

"DEAR MADAM.

"My writing to you will convince you that no personal evils, worse than defeats and disappointments, have fallen upon me. The enemy puts nothing to risk, and I can't in conscience put the whole army to risk. My antagonist has wisely shut himself up in inaccessible entrenchments, so that I can't get at him without spilling a torrent of blood, and that perhaps to little purpose.

"The Marquis de Montcalm is at the head of a great number of bad soldiers, and I am at the head of a small number of good ones that wish for nothing so much as to fight him; but the wary old fellow avoids an action, doubtful of the behaviour of his army. People must be of the profession to understand the disadvantages and difficulties we labour under, arising from the common natural strength of the country. I wish you much health, and am, dear Madam,

"Your obedient and affectionate son,

Jam: Wolfe.

Throughout his life Wolfe was in the most intimate sympathy with his mother. She had great influence with him and was consulted by him in all the interests of his life. Much of her energy was spent in the boy's early years, in curbing his fiery spirit, but she was unable to prevent him from joining the army as a volunteer before he was fourteen years of age. As he was about to sail with the Cartagena expedition under Lord Cathcart, he was deeply touched by his mother's sorrow and solicitude, for he wrote to her in the following terms:

". . . Very sorry, dear Mamma, that you doubt my love, which I'm sure is as sincere as ever any son's was to his mother . . . I will certainly write to you . . . by every ship I meet, because I know it is my duty. Besides, if it was not, I would do it out of love, with pleasure . . . but, pray, dear Mamma, if you love me, don't give yourself up to fears for us. I hope, if it please God, we shall soon see one another, which will be the happiest day that ever I shall see."

Fortunately for Wolfe, he did not,

after all, accompany this disastrous expedition. His enthusiasm was checked by an attack of illness, and he was forced to remain at home.

It is interesting to note, in passing, that George Washington's eldest brother served in Lord Cathcart's army, and, while engaged in the siege of Cartagena, contracted the disease which caused his death, his younger brother thus becoming sole heir to the Virginian property and to a position of independence.

WESTERHAM—SHOWING THE VICARGE WHERE WOLFE WAS BORN.

FROM A PHOTO.

Wolfe's mother endeavoured unsuccessfully to regulate her son's love affairs for several years.

At the age of twenty-one he became attached to a daughter of Sir Wilfred Lawson, of Ivell, a maid of honour to the Princess of Wales. He wooed her for several years, but she did not return his affection, causing him much unhappiness. Mrs. Wolfe endeavoured to wean him from this attachment, and tempted him with several of her favourites, in particular urging him to devote his attention to a Miss Hoskins, a Croydon heiress, worth thirty thousand pounds. Wolfe was, however, proof against her efforts and could not be led into a course of action distasteful to him.

The Croydon girl, in course of time, became the wife of his friend John Warde, of Squerryes.

Long after Wolfe had realized that his suit with Miss Lawson was hopeless, he could not think of her or hear of her without emotion. He refers to this in a letter written to his mother about a year after his final rejection by her, while on a visit to a friend who possessed a picture of this lady. He says:

"My mistress' picture hangs up in the room where we dine. It took away my stomach for two or three days and

made me look grave; but time, the never-failing aid to distressed lovers, has made the semblance of her a pleasing, but not a dangerous object. However, I find it best not to trust myself to the lady's eyes, or to put confidence in any resolutions of my own."

Before his final departure for America, Wolfe was attracted to a Miss Lowther, sister of the man who afterwards became first Earl of Lonsdale. She returned his affection, and presented him with a small miniature of herself which he wore around his neck until the night before the battle of the Plains of Abraham, when he delivered it into the keeping of his friend Jervis (afterwards Earl St. Vincent) for transmission to Miss Lowther, as he had a strong presentiment that he would be killed on the morrow.

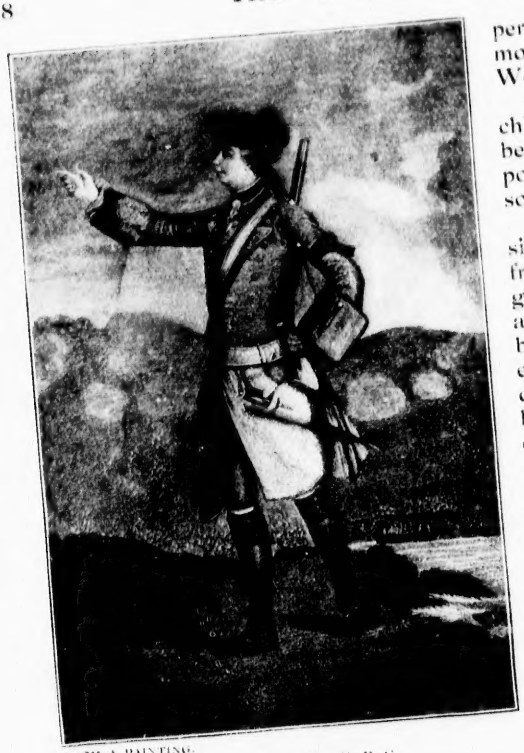
Among the Squerryes letters is one written by this lady in reference to Wolfe's death.

Along with the letters are the various commissions held by Wolfe during his military career. He became an ensign in his fifteenth year, acted as adjutant in the following year during the Dettingen campaign, when he was made a lieutenant, and at the age of seventeen obtained a captaincy.

In another year he was appointed a brigade-major, and as such fought at the battles of Falkirk and Culloden against Prince Charlie.

FROM A PHOTO.

SQUERRYES COURT, WESTERHAM.



FROM A PAINTING.
WOLFE BEFORE QUEBEC.

At the age of twenty-three he was a lieutenant-colonel, having gone through seven campaigns, and when twenty-nine he was made a full colonel.

Such rapid advancement of one who was without influence was remarkable in a period when appointments in all the public services were distributed through favouritism or by corrupt means.

When he was chosen to lead the expedition against Quebec the brevet rank of major-general was conferred upon him. His appointment created much jealousy among his seniors in the service, there being scores of generals who, in virtue of their seniority, might have been expected to supply a leader. Pitt, however, passed them over on account of their incapacity and made his choice solely on the ground of Wolfe's superior genius.

Among the great military heroes of Great Britain there is no one whose personality and character are more worthy of study than James Wolfe's.

His appearance was noticeable chiefly for a lack of physical beauty. His face was very plain, positively ugly according to some.

When full-grown, he was over six feet in height, with lanky frame and narrow shoulders, gawky and ungainly both in gait and figure. His profile has often been compared to the flap of an envelope, owing to the projection of a sharply pointed nose, combined with an unusually receding chin and forehead. His complexion was pale and colourless, his cheek-bones prominent, and his hair of a brilliant, aggressive brick-red hue. His eyes, however, were frank, bright and full of expression, redeeming considerably the predominant note of homeliness in his countenance.

His health was never robust, and the varied activities of his military life never served to establish physical stability. Extra effort always told upon him. In his latter years he suffered much from rheumatism and gravel. In general he bore his sufferings well and patiently, and was continually sustained by an indomitable spirit and by a keen determination not to be overcome. This was particularly noticeable during the last year of his life, his preparations for the final campaign being made when he was in a wretched state of distress from his chronic malady. And, during the anxious summer months before Quebec, he bore up through much physical discomfort with great endurance. Said he, one day to his physician: "I know perfectly well you cannot cure my complaint, but, pray, make me up so that I may be without pain for a few days and able to do my duty; that is all I want." On being told on one occasion that a sick officer had a wretched constitution, Wolfe answered, probably thinking of himself: "Don't tell me of constitution; that gentleman

has a good spirit, and spirit will carry a man through everything."

Yet, in the midst of his troubles, he was ever attentive to the sufferings of those about him. This was a marked feature in his character, even when he was in the press of most hazardous undertakings. For instance, on the memorable morning of the ascent of the heights of the St. Lawrence, a captain in the foremost storming party was shot through the chest. Wolfe noticing this rushed to his side, pressed his hand and praised his valour, encouraged him to be of good spirit, promised him leave of absence and promotion and sent an aide-de-camp to tell General Monckton what his wishes were, in case he should not live to carry them out himself. Needless to say, this sympathetic trait in Wolfe won the devotion of his soldiers.

Throughout his life he possessed the art of attracting friends, and of binding them to him—an exceptional faculty in an impulsive and sensitive nature. His outbursts of temper were infrequent and transient, and are not to be wondered at when we bear in mind his wretched physical condition. There was no malice in him, no jealous, envious spirit. His heart was warm and sympathetic, and he was distinguished for his high regard for truth and honour, as well as for his faithfulness to his friends, especially when they were in trouble. Thus, when his friend Colonel Cornwallis was under disgrace for his acquiescence in the refusal of the Governor of Gibraltar to aid Admiral Byng, Wolfe wrote to his father in the following terms:—

"I don't suppose there is a man living more to be pitied than poor Cornwallis. As he has more zeal, more merit, and more integrity than one commonly meets with among men, he will be proportionately mortified to find himself in disgrace, with the best intentions to deserve favour. I am heartily sorry to find him involved with the rest, of whose abilities or inclinations nobody has any very high notions; but Cornwallis is a man of approved courage and fidelity. He has unhappily, been misled upon this occasion by people of not half his value."

Wolfe's popularity was nowhere greater than among his brother-officers. He was free from all meanness and selfishness, and was as ready to acknowledge worth in another as he was quick to recognize it. He was ever glad to encourage younger men by precept, by example, and by friendly actions. In the same measure he detested the vicious, the idle, the pretentious and those who occupied positions which they were not fitted to fill.

He took a serious view of life and its responsibilities, and even regarded himself as one from whom was expected, at all times, the performance of

FROM AN OLD PRINT.

WOLFE'S PROFILE.

duties to the very best of his ability.

Wolfe's ideal, as to his profession, was far above that held by the majority of the army officers of his time—mere puppets of gold lace and frills. He strove to master every branch of his work, and in his ambition to be a general he did not neglect his humbler duties as ensign or captain. From the very beginning of his career he attracted the notice of his superiors by his diligence in all his work. When he became a lieutenant-colonel, his regiments were famous throughout the army for the health and good conduct of his men, for the thoroughness of the discipline among them, and for their vigourous prosecution of work allotted to them. Wolfe was not only a practical soldier. He loved and studied the theory and science of the military art. For years he cherished a passionate desire to pursue his studies on the Continent, and felt the keenest disappointment when permission was refused him. In order to make up for the educational deficiencies of his youth, he worked at classics, mathematics and other branches while attending to his regimental duties, employing tutors whenever he could obtain them. Ye gods! what a sensation would be created now-a-days if our smart young officers were to become studious in the midst of their routine barrack life, employing their spare intervals in the acquisition of some sound knowledge.

This is the only portrait of Wolfe known to have been painted from life. It represents him in the first regiment with which he served. The original is in the possession of Colonel Warde, of Squerrves Court.

Copy of a painting of Wolfe, by Schaak, in the National Portrait Gallery, London, Eng.

At an early age Wolfe was recognized as one of the best authorities in Britain in military matters, and there are records of his advice having been sought on different occasions, as well by seniors as by juniors. In a letter to a friend advising him as to a course of study, he says: "In these days . . . . . it is much to be wished that all our young soldiers . . . . . would try to make themselves fit for that important trust; without it we must sink under the superior abilities and indefatigable industry of our restless neighbours."

No doubt it was Wolfe's reputation for thoroughness and knowledge which contributed mainly to his rapid progress. Another feature, also, undoubtedly played some part in helping him, viz., the impression which he ever made on senior men of ability or position by his precociously thoughtful and grave attitude of mind, by the ripeness of his deliberative faculty, and the soundness of his judgment.

Wolfe's final opportunity was undoubtedly due to the very high opinion entertained of him by those in the highest places of authority, especially by Pitt himself. His keen, observant mind had recognized in Wolfe ability of the highest order, careful attention to the performance of his smallest duties, passionate enthusiasm for the science and practice of war, and all the qualifications essential to leadership.

Though not a politician, he was a strong patriot, ever filled with a burning desire to advance his country's glory. Indeed, it is probable that in his career he was as much influenced by this consideration as by any personal ambition.

That he was always ambitious to shine is very evident, and that he was sometimes disappointed when promotion did not take place as he wished is equally clear. Yet his ambition was of the purest order, that would only seek fame and advancement by fair and honourable means. He was entirely free from vanity or conceit, though he was not lacking in a feeling of confidence in his own powers.

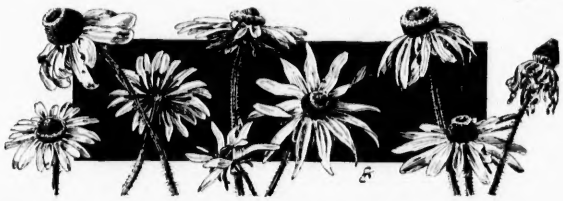
His nature was of the grave, reflective order, and he was given a good deal to introspection. He was very sensitive and reacted quickly to the nature of his surroundings. He ever drew on his friends for sympathy, seeming to feel the need of companionship.

As a general, though Wolfe had few opportunities of exercising his ability, he well deserves the attribute of greatness which has been universally conceded to him. He had an eye for perspective, possessed the power of selection and was able to give to things their proper proportional values. Thus, in his first great opportunity of exercising his generalship, viz., in the affairs of the Basque Road, a few hours sufficed to make a thorough survey of the enemy's position, to recognize the strength and weakness of their defences, to draw up a plan of action, which, at a military council held afterwards in England, was declared to be brilliant, masterly and worthy of having been carried into execution.

The Louisbourg campaign emphasized other features in his character, viz., his pertinacity, his untiring energy, his personal bravery and his fertility of resource. Though Amherst was the nominal head of the expedition, the glory of the fall of Louisbourg belongs to Wolfe. He was one of the first to land from the ships, and day after day during the siege he was ever planning new movements and executing them with promptness and vigour, to the admiration of his soldiers and the amazement of the foe.

> "Wolfe, where'er he fought,
> Put so much of his heart into his act,
> That his example had a magnet's force,
> And all were swift to follow whom all loved."

Quebec proved his patience and thoroughness, and his fierce determination to force the enemy to fight as he wished—in such a manner as to expose their weakness to him. For, it is to be understood, Wolfe did not conquer Quebec because he climbed the heights of Abraham, but because this picturesque feat was the determining cause in bringing on a general engagement between his small, compact and thoroughly trained force and the large, unreliable, ill-disciplined body under Montcalm. This had been his heart's desire through the long, weary months of waiting.

It must, therefore, be concluded that though, in quantity, the sum of Wolfe's performances is far below the measure of the deeds of Wellington, Napoleon or Marlborough, the quality of his work indicates genuis of the same high order as theirs. The brilliancy of his brief and meteoric career, achieving, as it did, such glorious results for the Empire, gave also the assurance that his life would have continued at the same high level of action had Providence prolonged his days.

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